

# East Heath Play Area

## Planning Statement

**on behalf of City of London Corporation**

01 November 2019



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## 1.0 Introduction

1.1 This planning statement has been prepared by Nexus Planning on behalf of the City of London Corporation ("The Applicant") in support of a planning application at the Playground at the junction of East Heath Road and Downshire Hill ("East Heath Play Area"), in Hampstead Heath ("the Site") to London Borough of Camden Council as the Local Planning Authority for the following development:

*"Enhancement of the existing East Heath Play Area, comprising of the installation of new play equipment and landscape features."*

1.2 The following documents have been submitted in support of this application:

- Application form;
- CIL form;
- Design Statement by Sioned Williams Landscape Design
- Site Location Plan; and
- East Heath Masterplan Version 2

1.3 This planning statement should be read in conjunction with the above listed supporting documents.

1.4 This planning statement is structured as follows:

- Section 2 sets out a description of the application site and the surrounding area and provides an overview of relevant planning history;
  - Section 3 details the development as proposed;
  - Section 4 outlines the relevant planning policy context;
  - Section 5 considers the development proposals against relevant planning policies;
  - Section 6 provides an overall summary and conclusion.
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## 2.0 Background Information

### Site and surrounding area

- 2.1 The site is an irregular rectangle and comprises a total of 2,570 square metres. The site contains the East Heath Play Area which features a number of play facilities and is accessed off Downshire Hill.



**Figure 1: Location of East Heath Play Area**

- 2.2 The existing East Heath Play Area provides basic playground equipment (including swings, a climbing frame, sand pit, play hut and slide) and a space for ball games. However, the existing facilities on the site need updating and improved utilisation of the site could be achieved.

- 2.3 The site is bounded by public roads on three sides. Willow Road runs along the south of the site, Downshire Hill along the east and East Heath Road runs along the north east. To the north west the site adjoins Hampstead Heath.
- 2.4 The site, being within Hampstead Heath is designated Metropolitan Open Land (MOL) and is also designated as Local Plan Metropolitan Open Space.
- 2.5 The site is not located within a Conservation Area and does not contain a locally listed or statutory listed building.

### **Planning History**

- 2.6 A review of Camden's Planning Search Tool has not identified any historic applications over the site.
- 2.7 Camden's Planning Search Tool has identified a number of planning applications relating to the surrounding residential and trees works within a conservation area, however these have not been deemed as relevant to this planning application.
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## 3.0 Proposed Development

3.1 The Proposed Development seeks the improvement of the existing East Heath Play Area through the installation of new play equipment and landscape features. The purpose of the Proposed Development is to enhance the play opportunities provided by the existing playground.

3.2 Specifically, the proposal includes the following new features:

- Grassy mounds and ditches;
- Plank and log bridges;
- Proposed basket swing;
- Timber multi-play unit with platform and slide;
- Boulders to form seating / climbing;
- Landscaping and planting;
- Seating and paths.

3.3 The existing sand area and toddler swing are both proposed to be relocated within the Play Area.

3.4 The details of the proposals are provided within the design statement prepared by Sioned Williams Landscape Design.

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## 4.0 Planning Policy Context

4.1 The relevant planning policy framework includes:

- The National Planning Policy Framework (2019)
- The London Plan (2016)
- London Borough of Camden's Development Plan (2017)

4.2 The most relevant planning considerations from the NPPF, the London Plan and Camden's Development Plan have been identified and are addressed below.

### National Planning Policy Context

4.3 The National Planning Policy Framework was adopted 27th March 2012, and the Government published the updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in July 2018, which was then revised in February 2019. The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies and how these are expected to be applied.

4.4 At paragraph 7 the NPPF sets out that the purpose of the planning system is to achieve sustainable development. Paragraph 8 then identifies the three overarching objectives of sustainable development; the social, environmental and economic objectives.

4.5 At paragraph 11 the NPPF outlines a presumption in favour of sustainable development, and for decision-taking this means:

*"Approving development proposals that accord with an up to date development plan without delay."*

4.6 Chapter 8 of the NPPF emphasises the Government's intention to promote healthy and safe communities. Specifically, Paragraph 96 states:

*"Access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities."*



4.7 At Paragraph 215, the NPPF states that due weight should be given to relevant policies in existing development plans according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF.

### **Regional Planning Context**

4.8 London Borough of Camden falls within the Greater London Area. Therefore, the London Plan (2016) is also of relevance, setting the planning strategy for the whole of London including Camden. This document sets out the Mayor's spatial development strategy for London. The London Plan outlines the integrated economic, environmental, transport and social planning policy.

4.9 The proposed scheme has been prepared in consideration with the following policies of the London Plan 2016:

- Policy 2.18 – Green Infrastructure
- Policy 3.16 – Protection and Enhancement of Social Infrastructure
- Policy 7.4 – Local Character
- Policy 7.5 – Public Realm
- Policy 7.17 – Metropolitan Open Land

4.10 Where relevant, these policies are discussed in further detail in Section 5 below.

### **Local Planning Policy Context**

4.11 At the local level, Camden's Development Plan consists of the Camden Local Plan (2017), the Camden Site Allocations Local Development Document (2013) and various neighbourhood plans. The site falls within neighbourhood plan area of the Hampstead Neighbourhood Plan (2018).

4.12 The Camden Local Plan (2017) provides the overarching vision, strategy and objectives for planning in Camden to 2031. Key policies include:

- Policy C1 – Health and Wellbeing
  - Policy C6 – Access for All
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- Policy A1 – Managing the Impact of Development
- Policy A2 – Open Space
- Policy D1 – Design

4.13 The application site is not included within the Site Allocations Local Development document (2013), and as such this policy has not been taken into consideration in the preparation of this application.

4.14 The Hampstead Neighbourhood Plan (2018) provides a vision for the Neighbourhood Plan Area, and sets out five main aims and a number of policies to support the delivery of that vision. Key policies include:

- Policy DH1- Design
- Policy NE1 – Local Green Space

4.15 Camden Council has also adopted a number of 'Camden Planning Guidance' (CPG) documents, and these have been considered in the design of this proposal.

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## 5.0 Material Planning Considerations

- 5.1 In this section of the Planning Statement, we assess the proposal against the most relevant policies from the planning framework, as identified above.
- 5.2 This assessment had specific regard to the following key issues:
- a. Principle of development
  - b. Impact upon the Metropolitan Open Space
  - c. Character and design
  - d. Other Material Considerations

### Principle of the Development

- 5.3 As noted above, Chapter 8 of the NPPF emphasises the Government's intention to support healthy and safe communities. Specifically, provision of social and recreational facilities is promoted at paragraph 92, and access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is encouraged at paragraph 96.
- 5.4 This position is supported by the London Plan (2016), whereby Policy 3.16 states *"Development proposals which provide high quality social infrastructure will be supported in light of local and strategic social infrastructure needs assessments"*. It is noted that play and recreational facilities fall under the London Plan's definition of social infrastructure.
- 5.5 Under Policy A2 of the Camden Local Plan (2017), the provision of new play facilities is given priority, particularly when it meets residents' needs.
- 5.6 The proposal is considered to enhance the existing play area, providing additional play equipment for public use. As such, the principle of the proposed development is considered to be supported by relevant national, regional and local planning policy, being consistent with Chapter 8 of the NPPF, Policy 3.16 of the London Plan and Policy A2 of the Camden Local Plan (2017).
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#### Impact upon Metropolitan Open Land

- 5.7 The application site is designated as Metropolitan Open Land (MOL), as is all of Hampstead Heath.
- 5.8 Within Policy 7.17 of the London Plan (2016) and Policy A2 of the Camden Local Plan (2017) the importance of preserving the openness and character of MOL is emphasised. Furthermore, Policy 7.17 of the London Plan (2016) awards MOL the same level of protection as the green belt.
- 5.9 Paragraph 145 of the NPPF sets out that the construction of new development in the green belt (or MOL) is inappropriate, apart from in specific circumstances. One such is identified at item (b) of Paragraph 145: *“the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) of outdoor sport, outdoor recreation...; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the green belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it”*.
- 5.10 The Proposed Development is for the enhancements to the existing play area at East Heath play area. As a result it is considered that the proposal is acceptable in terms of provision b of paragraph 145 of the NPPF.
- 5.11 Further, as detailed within the Design Statement by Sioned Williams Landscape Design document submitted in support of this application, the design of the scheme reflects the character of the landscape of Hampstead Heath which preserves the openness and character of the MOL.
- 5.12 Overall it is considered that the proposal development conforms with Policy 7.17 of the London Plan (2016) and with Policy A2 of the Camden Local Plan (2017).

#### Character and Design considerations

- 5.13 As previously referenced, Policy 7.17 of the London Plan (2016) and Policy A2 of the Camden Local Plan (2017) promotes the preservation of the existing character of MOL.
- 5.14 Further, Policy 7.4 of the London Plan (2016) emphasises that development proposals should contribute to a positive relationship with natural landscape features, including the underlying landform and topography of an area, and make a positive contribution to the character of a place.
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- 5.15 Policy 7.5 of the London Plan requires social infrastructure (including landscape treatments and furniture) to be of the *“highest quality, have a clear purpose, maintain uncluttered spaces and should contribute to the easy movement of people through the space”*.
- 5.16 Policy D1 of the Camden Local Plan (2017) also emphasises that development must respect its local context and character, and comprise high quality, complementary materials, detailing and landscaping design.
- 5.17 This policy position is reiterated by Policy DH1 of the Hampstead Neighbourhood Plan (2018), which requires development proposals to demonstrate how they respect and enhance the local character context.
- 5.18 The enhancements to the East Heath play area have been designed to reflect the natural surroundings of the play area and Hampstead Heath. Specifically the enhancements include natural features such as grass mounds, stones and a woodland feature. Additionally, the new play equipment will be constructed from natural materials such as timber of natural colouring.
- 5.19 Overall it is considered that the Proposed Development will enhance the landscape character of the surrounding area of Hampstead Heath and will conform with Policies 7.4 and 7.5 of the London Plan (2016), Policy D1 of the Camden Local Plan (2017), and Policy DH1 of the Hampstead Neighbourhood Plan (2018).

#### Other Material Considerations

- 5.20 In relation to flood risk, the site is located within Flood Zone 1, which is the lowest category of flood risk. The size does not exceed one hectare in size and therefore a flood risk assessment is not considered to be necessary.
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## 6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1 The proposed development at East Heath play area proposes the enhancement and provision of new play equipment and landscape features within the existing playground.
  - 6.2 The proposed development for the provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor recreation within an existing playground is considered acceptable development within the Metropolitan Open Land in line with Paragraph 145(b) of the NPPF.
  - 6.3 The design of the proposal integrates and reflects the natural landscape character of Hampstead Heath into the design of the play area, through detailed planting and naturally themed play features that can be enjoyed by all users.
  - 6.4 Overall the proposed development will provide significant improvements to the existing play area and is considered to be consistent with relevant national, regional and local planning policy considerations. Therefore it should be granted approval without delay.
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